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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1881

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000181

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM KISL KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ PRESIDENT AND AMBASSADOR AGREE ON DANGERS
OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

REF: A. BISHKEK 180

¶B. BISHKEK 154

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Classified By: Amb. Tatiana Gfoeller, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

THEY WILL TRY TO STORM THE WHITE HOUSE AND KILL ME

¶1. (C) During a March 2 meeting to discuss the future of Manas Air Base (Ref A), President Bakiyev raised with the Ambassador his deep concerns about the spread of religious extremism in Kyrgyzstan. "Ten years ago, the problem was only in the south," Bakiyev claimed, "but now it is everywhere." Bakiyev cited the October 2008 events in the southern city of Nookat, where a group of Muslims linked to the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir group rioted and threw stones at the city administration building after being denied permission to hold a celebration on the city's central square (Ref B). He emphasized that this was an extremely worrisome example of religious fundamentalists getting bolder and bolder and challenging the authority of the state. Bakiyev said he had warned about this danger ten years ago, but former President Akayev had ignored the problem. Bakiyev claimed that many in the Kyrgyz government are also blind to the dangers of Islamic extremism.

¶2. (C) Bakiyev admitted that the government has mismanaged the "fight for hearts and minds." He raised concerns about the number of young people going to mosques, and said it was necessary to monitor "what they say in mosques." "If you fill 13- and 14-year olds with hate," then there will be problems later, and those same young people could come back with guns, Bakiyev warned. "They will try to storm the White House and kill me," he added starkly.

USG DOES NOT EXPLOIT RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

¶3. (C) The Ambassador acknowledged Bakiyev's concerns about extremism, and she assured him that, contrary to some persistent rumors and press reports, the USG had no interest in exploiting religious extremism for political purposes here or anywhere else. The Ambassador recounted that she had served as Consul General in Jeddah, where she had seen first-hand the after-effects of a terrorist attack carried out on the U.S. Consulate General six months prior to her arrival by religious extremists. "I met with the families of the victims" of the al-Qaeda attack on the Consulate General, and "I know the dangers of extremism," she said. "You may hear from others that the U.S. supports Islamic extremists, but I can tell you we do not, and will not," the Ambassador said forcefully. Bakiyev looked decidedly relieved and expressed his appreciation for the Ambassador's assurance. Turning to Foreign Minister Sarbayev, who was also participating in the meeting, Bakiyev exclaimed: "This American understands the dangers of extremism better than our bureaucrats do. We need to educate our people to these dangers. I expect you and the other Ministers to get on this right away."

Comment

¶4. (C) Bakiyev's concern about growing Islamic fundamentalism is well-founded. Unfortunately, much of the appeal of groups like HT is fueled by the Kyrgyz government's inability to provide basic services to its population, its unwillingness to curb corruption, and the lack of credibility of official imams, starting with the poorly educated Grand

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Mufti. At a recent roundtable with NGO's on human trafficking, one participant shared with the Embassy her concerns that Hizb ut-Tahrir is engaged in trafficking. Specifically, she claimed that HT was recruiting young ethnic Russian girls (as young as eight years old), converting them to Islam, and providing them religious schooling in preparation for sending them to "better countries" for unspecified purposes.

GFOELLER